

# SOUTH PERTSHIRE AND THE COVENANTING STRUGGLE

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“PERTH the whole Kingdom with her wealth supplies.”<sup>1</sup> These words are not inapplicable to the contribution of Perth to the spiritual heritage of Scotland. In 1407 there suffered within its walls, it is thought near the Greyfriars Burying Ground, James Resby, an English Wycliffite, who was the first martyr for the truth in Scotland.<sup>2</sup> Its part in the Reformation struggle when John Knox lifted up his voice in St John’s Church with great results is well known. The stand that Ebenezer Erskine made in 1732 for the liberties of the people took place in the same venerable building. The names of Auchterarder and Lethendy, so decisive in the great ecclesiastical movement of modern times, mark the county’s prominent share in Scotland’s recent religious history.

## I

In the first phase, under the Marquis of Montrose, Perth’s share was honourable. In few towns was the Covenant signed more numerously. After 1638 every fourth man was ordered to enlist in the Covenanting forces, a hundred muskets, sixty pikes and a puncheon of matches being ordered at a cost of £19,478 for their equipment.<sup>3</sup> Under Leslie and Montrose, who was then a Covenanter, 7000 or 8000 men marched from the town to Aberdeen to oppose Huntly. When the Marquis went over to the side of the King, Perth took up arms against him.

In 1644 the King’s standard was unfurled on the banks of the Garry, near Blair-Athole. Montrose’s army numbered only 800, but by

<sup>1</sup> Translated from the Latin of Alexander Neckham, Abbot of Exeter, in a thirteenth century estimate of Perth’s early greatness.

<sup>2</sup> An occurrence commemorated in Perth only in a memorial Window in the Middle United Free Church in which Martyrs of the Reformation and Covenanting Martyrs figure. For difference of opinion on the precise date of the martyrdom, see MacEwen’s *Hist. Church in Scot.*, I, 326, note 3.

<sup>3</sup> Cowan’s *The Ancient Capital of Scotland*, II, 136.

Irishmen it was swelled to 2000. Marching by Weem and Glenalmond, they reached the Hill of Buchanty on August 31, and were there joined by about 1000 from Menteith. Hearing of the approach of Montrose, an army, variously estimated at from 5000 to 8000, marched out from Perth on Sunday, September 1, under Lord Elcho, along with men from Strathearn, Angus and Fife, a company of whom, it is believed, were lodged for a night in St John's West Parish Church. Confident of victory, they proceeded to Lamberkin Moor.<sup>1</sup>

Frederick Carmichael, one of their preachers, declared that "if ever God spake Truth out of human lips, he promised to them certain victory in the name of God."<sup>2</sup> The battle, however, was disastrous. The Covenanters were engaged in prayer when the Royalists, armed with swords, long clubs and Lochaber axes, attacked them. The battle lasted only half an hour, when, overpowered by a shower of stones, the Covenanters turned and fled. It is said that the defeat of Elcho was attributable to the treachery of Lord Drummond and Oliphant of Rossie, who led the Horse of the Covenanters.<sup>3</sup> Not more than ten, it is believed, were killed on the field, but it is affirmed that the Royalists did not lose a single man and got a great share of plunder, including six cannon. The pursuit was disastrous, lasting, it is believed, from eight in the morning till nine at night. The Covenanters tried hard to reach shelter at Earl's Dykes,<sup>4</sup> a part of Perth where the General Railway Station now stands, but they were overtaken and a great number were killed near the cottar town of Needless.<sup>5</sup> Nine or ten unwounded fugitives fell down dead through sheer exhaustion. Many hid themselves in cellars saying they would rather die than fight. A trumpet was blown, but the response was such that there were not nearly enough to man the gates.

A demand was made by Montrose that the enemy should come over to his side. Almost the only bright spot for Perth in this dark day was the reply: "Not so if it meant to encroach on conscience or break any part of the Covenant, lest God should be provoked and should bring a heavier judgment on us." The gates, however, were opened on condition that no entrance should be given to the Irishmen, to prevent the town being rifled, and to afford a safe passage to their homes to all the army. After this it is said that the barbarous Highland Host

<sup>1</sup> For an account of the battle (commonly called the Battle of Tibbermuir or Tippermuir), *v. Cowan*, II, 140, 141; Napier's *Montrose and the Covenanters*, II, 298-313; and Hewison's *Covenanters*, I, 408-11.

<sup>2</sup> Napier, II, 302.

<sup>3</sup> Cowan, II, 140.

<sup>4</sup> See Hunt's *Hammerman's Book*, Perth, 1839, p. lxxii.

<sup>5</sup> So called from a neighbouring alehouse, which from its close proximity to the City, it was "needless" for carters on the old road westward to patronise. Needless Road still exists in Perth.

sacrilegiously killed and roasted sheep in the parish church of Kinnoull, and burned the Communion tables and seats.

Of this sad battle there existed till recently a memorial, though greatly defaced. It is believed that there were several tombstones erected where the sufferers fell, but they have all been used for building purposes. A monument, raised probably after the Restoration, stood for a time in the field where they were buried, near Pitheavlis Castle, in the Craigie district of Perth. It was afterwards removed and built into an old alehouse on the old road to Dunning. On this house becoming roofless through an outbreak of fire, an offer of the stone was made to Perth Town Council by St Stephen's Parish Church Session, but the matter was allowed to lapse. The stone remained in the walls of the roofless house till recently, when the building was pulled down. No one knows where it now is.

## II

After this battle Perth disappears for some time from the history of the Covenant, and when it re-emerges its reputation is far from being satisfactory. "On the Citadel of Perth the arms of the Commonwealth had been carved, but when the King returned, a thistle, the proud and rugged emblem of the North, grew from the wall and hid the alien insignia."<sup>1</sup> When the cruel decree was issued in 1662 for the ejection of non-conforming ministers, Perth almost to a man conformed. In 1660 bonfires were lit to commemorate the Restoration, and the number of ministers belonging to the district who were consecrated Bishops compared favourably with that of any other.

The following are those ministers who suffered for conscience' sake :

ABERDALGIE—REV. GEORGE HALIBURTON.—In 1657 Haliburton was ordained assistant and successor to the minister, and in 1662 was ejected for refusing to conform. He was spared the sufferings of many of his fellow non-conformists, for, by the kindness of his friend and patron, George Hay of Balhousie, he was allowed to occupy a cottage in Dupplin, where he lived in great privacy till he died in 1682.<sup>2</sup> In this retreat there were born among eleven children the famous Thomas Haliburton, who, with his widowed mother, went over for safety to Holland, where he studied Latin at the school of Erasmus. Returning after the Revolution to Scotland, he received competing calls from South Leith, Elie, and Ceres. Choosing the smallest on account of weak health, he was settled in Ceres in 1700. In 1710 he was admitted

<sup>1</sup> See Smellie's *Men of the Covenant*, 1911, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson's *Presbytery of Perth*, p. 6.

Principal and Professor of Divinity in St Andrews, and died in 1712 at the age of thirty-eight.

A sad nemesis overtook the Rev. Mungo Wemyss (translated from Glendevon), who was inducted to Aberdalgie on Haliburton's ejection. It is said he lived in "great trouble." When he took to his death-bed he sent for Haliburton, and, asking his forgiveness for perjury against him, requested him to pray for him, which he did "very heartily," but he died, apparently in despair, at the age of thirty-four.<sup>1</sup>

**DRON—REV. ALEXANDER PITCAIRNE.**—Pitcairne was ordained and admitted in 1656, and ejected for non-conformity in 1662. Although outlawed and persecuted, he continued to live in the district till 1682, being "the leading spirit among the covenanters of the district." Field meetings, largely attended, were conducted by him, and he dispensed ordinances to all who had the courage to attend. After many dangers and narrow escapes "the Marquis of Athole came and turned him out," though not till 1682.

In that year an attempt was made to induct a successor, but it was successfully resisted by the people. At length, only after an armed force had been quartered in Dron, Pitcairne was driven into banishment, several of his adherents being imprisoned and two at least shot.<sup>2</sup>

Pitcairne lived to see better days. Being alive at the time of the Revolution, with the cordial approbation of his brethren, he took the Moderator's Chair in the Presbytery, which he had vacated at the time of his ejection, and as a crown to his honourable life of struggle, he was elected Principal of the Old College in St Andrews in 1691.<sup>3</sup> He died in 1695, at the age of seventy-three.

**DUNBARNEY—REV. ROBERT YOUNG.**—Young had been Professor of Humanity in the University of Edinburgh, and was admitted to Dunbarney in 1647. He was Moderator of Presbytery when it was suppressed by Cromwell in the time of the Commonwealth. In 1664 he was ejected for non-conformity. Boldly did he confront Archbishop Sharp, who alleged that he had been "orderly" deposed by the Synod of Fife for telling an untruth. He declared that the Archbishop had deposed him in his own chamber, "one minister only being with him there: and whether his consent was asked or given the complainer did not know."<sup>4</sup> The prejudiced Council, however, accepted the Archbishop's

<sup>1</sup> Kirkton's *Hist. Church Scot.*, p. 196, quoted in Scott's *Fasti* (New Edition).

<sup>2</sup> For an account of Pitcairne, see Wodrow, III, 374-390, and Wilson, pp. 44-48.

<sup>3</sup> Minutes of Pres., Perth, July 30, 1690, and Dec. 19, 1691, as quoted in Wilson, p. 46.

<sup>4</sup> Wodrow, p. 212.

version of an act which was apparently so despotic. He seems, though ejected, to have had a great love for his old parish, for in his last will, dated 1677, he made a bequest to the schoolmaster "for his encouragement to teach pair bairns."<sup>1</sup>

FORGANDENNY—REV. DAVID ORME.<sup>2</sup>—Orme was inducted on August 30, 1660, and deposed soon afterwards for non-conformity. It is said that a chapel was built for him within the grounds of Freeland by the Lord Ruthven of those days. Lord Ruthven was fined £4800 for attending conventicles and harbouring outed ministers. William Oliphant (probably of Ardargie) was fined £1200. A general fine of £11,335 was exacted from Forgandenny parish.<sup>3</sup>

REDGORTON—REV. JOHN CRUICKSHANKS.—John Cruickshanks (or Crookshanks) was ordained in 1626, and his name appears frequently in the minutes of the Presbytery of Perth, always among the "protesting" party of strongly covenanting sympathies. At the rising of Montrose he spoke of himself as "in danger of his life,"—"hated as an honest minister,"—"his heritors joining the Rebellion."<sup>4</sup> In 1662 he was deprived for non-conformity, and, "like many of his outed brethren," he went over to Ireland. His stay there must have been brief, for in 1664 we find him among those who are spoken of as "fugitives from Ireland," and "seditious." He is mentioned by name as "a pretended minister" from Ireland, "preaching in several places without licence, contrary to law," and as summoned to answer before the Council in Edinburgh on July 27, 1664.<sup>5</sup> After this his life was probably spent amid hardships and itinerant field preaching. In 1666 he is in Galloway with Rev. Gabriel Semple,<sup>6</sup> minister of Kirkpatrick-Durham, in Kirkcudbrightshire. With him he took an active part in stirring up the movement that led to the Pentland Rising.<sup>7</sup> According to Wodrow and Kirkton he was the "great instrument to persuade the

<sup>1</sup> Wilson, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> Various spelt "Orum" or "Graham"—Hunter's *Diocese of Dunkeld*, I, 126; Philip, p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> Wilson, p. 93.

<sup>4</sup> Hunter, I, 347.

<sup>5</sup> Wodrow, p. 412. Wodrow remarks that this is the first occurrence of the term "pretended minister."

<sup>6</sup> Deprived in 1662; restored 1689; and translated to Jedburgh, 1691.

<sup>7</sup> At the time when field preaching and consequent persecution increased, Semple with whom Cruickshanks subsequently acted "was sent to Galloway by leading Covenanters to ascertain the wishes of the people. While making up their report the galling persecutions of Sir James Turner took place, which led to the Pentland rising."—Stewart's *Covenanters of Teviotdale*, p. 81.

people to rise in arms.”<sup>1</sup> At Lanark he and Semple preached at the renewing of the Covenant, and with another minister, the Rev. Andrew M’Cormick from Ireland, was among the first to fall in the battle of Rullion Green. It is said that after the battle some “godly women” came from Edinburgh to bury the dead. The body of Cruikshanks not being found, there was some uncertainty for over a year whether he was, after all, among the killed. These two ministers, whom Dr Smellie in his *Men of the Covenant* (p. 166) describes as “ministers from Ulster with militant souls,” are commemorated on the memorial stone on the battlefield as having fallen along with about fifty others.<sup>2</sup>

METHVEN—REV. JOHN MURRAY.—In 1648 Murray was elected conjunct minister with his father (Rev. Robert Murray), who had been a member of the Glasgow Assembly in 1638, and foremost in signing the National Covenant in Perth. He joined the Protesting party in 1651, and his name appears frequently in alliance with Cruikshanks’. On August 23, he, along with the Rev. James Guthrie of Stirling, and the Rev. Alexander Moncrieff of Scoonie, was apprehended, along with ten other protesting and remonstrating ministers, for drawing up a supplication to the King. They were thrown into prison, and a letter is preserved saying that they were “expecting banishment at the least.” Murray was, after long delay and imprisonment, brought before Parliament on a charge of high treason for his part in drawing up “a remonstrance,” and also for the authorship of a pamphlet called *The Causes of God’s Wrath*. He was, however, released from prison through the influence of the Earl of Athole and “the many Murrays in Parliament,” and died on November 10, 1661.<sup>3</sup>

DUNNING—REV. WILLIAM REID.—Reid was a native of Arngask, where he regularly attended the ministry of Pitcairne in Dron, his own

<sup>1</sup> Wodrow, II, 25, 30; Kirkton, pp. 238, 243. See also *Memoirs of Sir James Turner*, quoted in R. L. Stevenson’s *The Pentland Rising*, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> M’Crie’s *Memoirs of William Veitch*, p. 429. A question of identity, somewhat difficult to determine, has been raised. The facts, as given, are taken from Wodrow (*ut supra*) and from Wilson’s *Presbytery of Perth*, pp. 233, 234. Dr Hew Scott’s *Fasti*, in both the old and new editions, says that, Wodrow has “probably” mistaken Crookshanks for his son, who, after being licensed by the Presbytery of Perth, went over to Ireland and was ordained at Raphoe before 1661. Rev. John Hunter, while mentioning John Crookshanks, jun., repeatedly, gives substantially the same account of his life as Wilson. If the pronounced Covenanting sympathies of Cruikshanks, sen., are remembered the balance seems to incline to his being the Pentland hero. It seems noteworthy that in Scott’s *Fasti* no date is given for Cruikshanks’ death.

<sup>3</sup> Wilson, pp. 143, 148, and Scott’s *Fasti*, where the date of death is given as against Wilson, who conjecturally indicates possible identity with another Covenanter who lived for many years after. See also Hunter, I, 357.

minister being one of those who conformed to Episcopacy. He had the honour of fighting in the battle of Bothwell Brig. Along with some others he hid in the church at Hamilton. Several were discovered and killed, but Reid, hiding in the joists of the roof, remained in his concealment, having nothing to eat for three days but a bit of tobacco. Subsequently he obtained licence as a minister, and became a noted field preacher. He had a singular experience at a conventicle at Megginch, near Errol. Personally unknown to the laird, he, in disguise, obtained lodgings for the night in the servants' quarters. The laird, hearing of the stories by which he had made himself so popular with the servants, came to speak with him. The conversation turned upon the conventicle to be held next day. The laird expressed his determination to suppress it and to have the preacher apprehended. "If that is your purpose," said the stranger, "I may be of use to you as I know the man well. If you will go to the meeting with me and sit quietly till the end of the service I engage to hand him over to you." Next day, when the minister appeared with the laird, the congregation thought that he had been taken prisoner, but giving a signal not to disperse, Reid went behind a knoll and changed into ministerial garb. After the service he gave himself up according to bargain, but the laird said that he had been so impressed with what he had heard that henceforth he would have nothing to do with any measure against conventicles.<sup>1</sup>

When calmer times came after the Revolution, Reid received several competing calls. After labouring in Rattray during 1690 and 1691, he was settled in Dunning, where he had a long and honourable ministry. Feeling the infirmities of old age, he resigned, but he was not suffered by the Presbytery to lay down his burden, and he had still four years of honourable service. Having fought for the Covenant in his youthful days, he was called once more to buckle on his armour in his old age and to fight against the Jacobites. While they were in Auchterarder—which they ultimately burned—being of sterner stuff than Stedman, who was then minister there, he exchanged pulpits with him and preached with a pistol hanging round his neck.<sup>2</sup> Enraged at this the Jacobites threatened to burn Dunning down. After returning home, Reid was taken ill. Hearing that the Jacobites were approaching, his wife urged him to allow himself to be carried to some place of shelter. He, however, said that before they entered the town he would be "beyond their reach." He ordered the carpenter to come and take the measurements for his coffin, and just as the Jacobites were entering Dunning he

<sup>1</sup> Philip, pp. 69-70 ; Wilson's *Dunning*, pp. 26, 27, 28.

<sup>2</sup> Marshall's *Historic Scenes of Perth-shire*, p. 258. Stedman was afterwards largely instrumental in framing the celebrated "Auchterarder Creed," about the time of the "Marrow Controversy."

died, aged about 75. He was buried hastily, and a shower of snow prevented the desecration of his grave. His widow was turned out into the snow, her house, in common with all the houses of Dunning, being burned. She was first compelled to supply the soldiers with food. At this time the thorn tree was planted which, with an appropriate inscription, still flourishes in the village.

### III

It now remains to speak of some who, though not ministering in the county, had a Perthshire ancestry.

Perthshire is proud to have the Rev. Donald Cargill, the dauntless Covenanter, as one of its sons. Though it is known that he preached in field conventicles in his native county, his life was led in the sterner and more dangerous fields of the West of Scotland.

He was born in Rattray, probably in the year 1619.<sup>1</sup> His father, Laurence Cargill, was a gentleman and notary in the town. With great difficulty he persuaded his son to study for the ministry: as the son said: "the work of the ministry was too great a burden for weak shoulders." He remained in Perthshire till 1655, and might have found a refuge among the peaceful hills of his native county, when ordered by the Government to remove "North of the Tay." The only incident in Cargill's life directly connected with Perthshire that I have found is recorded by the Rev. George Gilfillan. It is said that when pursued by his persecutors Cargill leaped the Linn of Ericht at Blairgowrie—a linn never leapt before or since. When spoken to about the feat afterwards, he said: "Aye, but I had a long run to it. I ran all the way from Perth."<sup>2</sup>

Another name deserving of mention, both as sprung from honourable Perthshire ancestry and as having served the cause of the Covenant in Perth, is that of the Rev. Alexander Moncrieff. Moncrieff was the grandfather of the celebrated Secession Father, Alexander Moncrieff of Culfargie, minister of Abernethy. Moncrieff was born in Kintillo, a quaint little hamlet near Bridge-of-Earn, in 1613. He was minister of the parish of Scoonie, near Leven in Fifeshire, till he was ejected for non-conformity in 1662. Not long after the Restoration, he along with other ministers was apprehended while drawing up an address of congratulation to Charles II., which at the same time reminded him of the obligations under which he ascended the throne. Though his life was threatened, and he was imprisoned, first in Edinburgh Castle, and then

<sup>1</sup> Smellie, p. 341. In Howie's *Scots Worthies*, I, 392, the date of birth is given about the year 1610.

<sup>2</sup> Gilfillan's *Martyrs and Bards of the Covenant*, p. 104.



warded in houses, nothing could make him recant. He was released, but banished from his flock, and was compelled to take up residence at a distance of not less than ten miles from the seat of a Bishop, and not less than seven miles from a county town. For a time he lived in a quiet place in the Highlands, and, then, owing to the need of educating his children, he came to Perth. At first a few resorted to him to hear the Gospel, but afterwards a great many attended his services. Subsequently, he removed to Edinburgh. Here he had many narrow escapes. On one occasion, a captain with some soldiers searched every house in the close where he was staying except the one where he was living, though its door stood wide open.

He was often urged to leave the country for safety, and was called to Londonderry. He always said, however, that he "preferred to suffer where he had sinned and that he would endeavour to keep possession of the house [the land of his nativity] till its Lord should return to it," and he lived till the harvest of 1688 when the arm of persecution was broken.<sup>1</sup>

It should not be forgotten that it was at Perth that the Rev. James Guthrie of Stirling, the first to seal his testimony with his blood after the Restoration, gave his brave testimony, an utterance which cost him his life.

To the Courts of Charles II., met in Parliament in Perth before the battle of Worcester, there were summoned James Guthrie and his colleague, David Bennet. They appeared on February 22, 1651, "like Andrew Melville risen to life once more." "The short man who would not bow" gave in a declinature to the King's judgment on offences committed in sermons, and for that offence he and his colleague were "warded," one in Perth and the other in Dundee. Six days after that, so far from relenting, they gave in a protest against the King's authority. This declinature at Perth was one of the charges that brought James Guthrie to the scaffold on June 1, 1661.<sup>2</sup>

Perthshire, too, had the honour of hearing at a conventicle in the house of James Duncan, Dupplin, the voice of the Rev. John Welsh of Irongray, John Knox's great-grandson. It is well known that Claverhouse, upon intelligence that Welsh was lurking in some secret place, would ride forty miles on a winter's night; yet, when he came to the place, would miss his prey. Welsh has been known to ride three days and three nights without food and to preach upon a mountain at midnight on one of these nights. He used to say to his friends, when they counselled him to be more wary, that he believed God would preserve

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Alexander Moncrieff*, p. xii; *Seton's House of Moncrieff*, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> Smellie, p. 93; *Life of Guthrie*, pp. 145-161 (issued by Free Church Publications Com.).

his life as long as he was in danger, but that whenever he betook himself to safety then "his time would come"—which accordingly came to pass, for, after Bothwell in 1679, when all forsook field preaching, he went to London and died there in 1681. For harbouring Welsh, James Duncan was fined.

Early in the year 1679 there came into Perth a wearied servant of God, Rev. John Welwood. "I will set a plumb-line in the midst of my people. Oh! how few of the ministers will answer this plumb-line—Lord, send us a Welwood, a Cargill and a Cameron and such as they, and make us quit of the rest." Such were the words of Alexander Peden, "the Prophet," about the servant of God who, worn out with hardships of persecution, entered Perth.<sup>1</sup>

A good man named John Barclay had the courage to receive Welwood into his house. For three months, unknown to any, save a worshipping circle, Welwood exercised a beautiful ministry of encouragement to the faithful, and of tender dealing about their interest in Christ with those who saw him, on what was obviously his death-bed from consumption. With the words: "Now eternal light and no more night and darkness to me," did he welcome the morning light of one day and by the evening he was dead. News spread quickly over the city that a preacher on whose head a price had long been laid had died within its precincts, and the magistrates resolved to "arrest his corpse." A worthy woman, Janet Hutton, had given the body a shelter in her house, so that Barclay should be saved trouble for harbouring so notorious a man. Next day friends flocked into Perth from Fife to attend the funeral, but the magistrates would not allow him to be buried in the Greyfriars' churchyard, and called out the militia to enforce their authority. As fate would have it, the arms were in the keeping of a man, John Bryce, who was a friend of the Covenant. He refused to deliver them up, and for thus defying the civic authority he was thrown into the Tolbooth. Eventually the magistrates allowed Welwood's friends to carry his body to be buried, where they pleased, outside the walls. Note was taken of any of the citizens who were brave enough to accompany the funeral, and many of them, it is said, were imprisoned. In the deepening shadows of an April afternoon the sad procession left the city, two men being sent on to the churchyard of Dron to prepare a grave. The keys of the churchyard<sup>2</sup> were refused by the minister, but after the sun had set

<sup>1</sup> Uttered by Peden while preaching in Edinburgh. See Philip, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> As noted, the minister of Dron, Thomas Pitcairne, was of Covenanting sympathies, and at this time was under sentence of eviction, but when it is recollected that his presence in the parish (instead of being banished) was due to the connivance of Archbishop Leighton, his refusal of the keys of the graveyard should not be too hastily condemned.

on the Ochils, Welwood's sorrowing friends climbed over the wall and digged a grave.<sup>1</sup> Here there is a tombstone with, on one side, the record of his death at the age of thirty, and, on the other, this inscription :—

HERE LYES  
 A FOLLOUER OF THE LAMB  
 THRO' MANY TRIBULATIONS CAME  
 FOR LONG TIME OF HIS CHRISTIAN  
 RACE WAS PERSECUTE FROM  
 PLACE TO PLACE. A SCOTTISH  
 PROPHET HERE BEHOLD  
 JUDGMENT AND MERCY WHO FORETOLD  
 THE GOSPEL BANNER DID DISPLAY  
 CONDEMNED THE SINS OF THAT SAD  
 DAY & VALLIANTLY FOR  
 TRUTH CONTENTED UNTIL  
 BY DEATH HIS DAYS WERE ENDED.<sup>2</sup>

On the other side of the stone, along with a sculptured representation of an "angel's head and wings," there is this inscription :—

HERE LYES THE REV  
 EREND MR JOHN WEL  
 WOOD MINISTER OF  
 THE GOSPEL IN THE CHU  
 RCH OF SCOTLAND  
 WHO DYED AT PERTH  
 APRIL 1679. ABOUT THE 30 YEAR OF HIS  
 AGE.

John Welwood was born about 1649 in the parish of Tundergarth in Dumfriesshire, where his father was minister. Before entering the church, he had been a teacher at Errol.<sup>3</sup> He is said to have been called to the parish of Tarbolton, but because he is described as having been "intruded," he was turned out by the Privy Council for his Covenanting sympathies.<sup>4</sup> Nothing daunted he continued to preach, and was a familiar figure at conventicles in Fifeshire (notably in one on the Lomond Hill)<sup>5</sup> and in Galloway. He is said to have preached several times in

<sup>1</sup> Fittis's "A Covenanter's Burial," in *Book of Perthshire Memorabilia*, pp. 257-261; Philip, pp. 117-118.

<sup>2</sup> For further information about Welwood's grave at Dron, see Thomson's *Martyr Graves of Scot.* (Second Series), p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> For information about Welwood's father, see Philip, pp. 92, 99.

<sup>4</sup> V. Wodrow, II, 357.

<sup>5</sup> Rev. John Blackadder, in one of his letters about the conventicles in Fife, speaks of Welwood as "a young, but grave and pious man."

his father's parish in Tundergarth with such power that more of the inhabitants were moved than had ever been the case during his father's ministry. It is said that one day a gentleman came to turn him off his ground, but was so affected with Welwood's discourse that eventually he became a sufferer for the Covenant himself.

Like Peden, he almost seemed to have the gift of prophecy. In one of his last public appearances at Boulterhall in Fife, looking towards St Andrews, he said: "If that unhappy prelate, Sharp, die the death of all, then God never spoke by me." On his death-bed he said to one "Ayton of Inchdarnie, Fife," who came to see him and who told him of Sharp's wickedness: "You will soon be quit of him, and he will get a sudden and sharp off-going, and you will be the first that will take the good news of his death to Heaven." This was in a measure fulfilled, for the young man was killed within a few days of Archbishop Sharp's death, which took place within a month of Welwood's death.

#### IV

To the roll of honour outside of the ministry, Perth contributes the first female sufferer<sup>1</sup> in the person of Isobel Alison. According to local tradition this heroine lived in a house with an outside stair fronting the High Street of Perth, on the east side of the Cutlog Vennel: it was pulled down in 1862 to make room for the Evangelical Union Church—a church that was afterwards removed to give place to the Perth Theatre. We get a glimpse of Isobel Alison at the age of twenty-five, and then she disappears till she is well on her way to the martyr's crown. After the murder of Archbishop Sharp on May 3, 1679, four of the band of horsemen fled towards Perth—James Russel, belonging to Kettle, George Balfour of Gilston, David Hackston of Rathillet, and John Balfour of Kinloch. They found quarters first in a widow's house, east of Bridge-of-Earn. For a fortnight they hovered about Dupplin and Aberdalgie, and, while lurking at a place called "The Chingles," near the Kirk of Forteviot, "they were joined," it is said, by "an honest lass called Isobel Alison." Two of them are said to have ventured into Perth, and no doubt they visited Isobel Alison's house.<sup>2</sup>

After this she disappears from view for eighteen months. She was first apprehended for the freedom of her remarks on the severity of the curates to those who would not conform. She had sometimes, but not often, heard Donald Cargill preach in the fields, for conventicles were not very common in the neighbourhood. While influenced by Cargill, Richard Cameron and the extreme section, she held her own opinions very quietly. When brought before the Perth authorities nothing

<sup>1</sup> Fittis's *The Heroines of History*, p. 311.

<sup>2</sup> Kirkton, p. 425.

could be alleged against her except that she had conversed with some whom the Government considered rebels. After examination, she was dismissed with an admonition to be more circumspect. Not long afterwards, however, while living very quietly in her chambers in Perth, she was seized by a band of soldiers and taken prisoner to Edinburgh.

She was first brought before the Privy Council, and a document was drawn up against her, composed entirely of her own answers to questions. "We pity you, for we have found reason and quick wit in you, and would have you to take the matter into consideration" said her accusers, who were impressed by her demeanour. She answered bravely: "I have been advising on it these seven years, and I hope not to change now."

From the Privy Council she was remitted to the Court of Justiciary, and a jury was got together with the utmost difficulty by threats of fining: two did absent themselves and were fined. Her condemnation has well been called by Wodrow "a flaming proof of the iniquity of the period." "I am free from all matters of fact," she urged, "only for my judgment of things am I brought here." Yet with flagrant injustice, according to the Old Register of the Tolbooth, she was "set at liberty by being taken to the Grassmarket."<sup>1</sup> Bishop Paterson said to her and her fellow-sufferer, Marion Harvey of Bo'ness: "You said you would never hear a curate but now you will be forced to hear one." The two young women, however, drowned the curate's voice, when he was asked to pray, by singing the 23rd Psalm. On the scaffold Isobel sang the 84th Psalm to the tune, "Martyrs," and read the 16th Chapter of St Mark's Gospel. Her body, there is little doubt, was cast into the corner of Greyfriars' churchyard, Edinburgh, reserved for malefactors, where most of the martyrs sleep who suffered during the reign of Charles II. and James II.

We have another tale of heroism in the life of Robert Gourlay, a covenanter who was born in the Carse of Gowrie, about 1644. Fleeing from Bothwell Brig, where he had fought, he came to a wall where capture seemed inevitable. He inserted his clasp-knife into a chink in the wall and so scaled it, and then, amid a shower of bullets, disappeared into a neighbouring thicket. Thence he fled to the Clyde, in whose stream and among the shrubs round about the banks he hid himself till night fell, injuring himself for life by the cold of the river after the heat and excitement of the battle.

On another occasion, being summoned to surrender to a company of

<sup>1</sup> "At the assize many were observed to tremble" because the processes were in every way extraordinary, and because they noted that "their confessions were not signed" and that "nothing was proved against them." Wodrow, III, 276, 277. Cf. Fittis's *Heroines of Hist.*, p. 311, and Anderson's *Ladies of the Covenant*, pp. 335-357.

troopers, he said he was prepared to open the house, but, quietly unbolting the back door, he bolted past his captors and was lost to them. Near Hamilton he was actually captured, but while locked up in a stable with horses, he managed, by standing on a horse's back, to gain the joists, from which he forced his way through the thatch, and so escaped. This brave man survived the persecution, and he and his wife lived to an honoured age in Cambusnethan, where his tombstone can be seen in the churchyard.<sup>1</sup>

In the sufferings of these times, a certain Laurence Gibson, from Arngask, had his share. The only crime laid to his charge was that he attended the services of Pitcairne of Dron before he was turned out of the parish. He seems to have married a servant in the house of Lord Ruthven, and several ladies worked hard for his liberation. He was taken to the Tolbooth in Perth, and then to Edinburgh, where he was condemned to enlist in one of the Scottish regiments in the United States of America. He was at last liberated on Lord Ruthven paying some money, and was a servant for many years in his family.<sup>2</sup>

There are other Covenanters whose sufferings in the cause are commemorated by nothing else than their grave.

One of them, Thomas Smal, is literally only a name. He lies buried in the churchyard of Ecclesmagirdle,<sup>3</sup> underneath the shadow of the Ochils, about two miles, S.E. from Forgandenny, with its small roofless and ivy-covered church. All we know of this sufferer is contained in the inscription on a flat stone with the letters deeply cut, which reads as follows :—

HERE LYIS ANE VER  
TOUS HUSBAND  
MAN THOMAS SMAL  
WHO DIED FOR  
T            S  
E            D  
RELIGION COVENA  
NT KING AND CO  
UNTRIE THE I  
SEPTEMBER 1645  
HIS AGE 58.

<sup>1</sup> V. Philip, who mentions that a certain Robert Gourlay is said to have been seized in 1683 in Cambusnethan by a party of soldiers, and in the following year another James Gourlay (which he thinks may possibly be a misprint for Robert Gourlay) was before the Committee for public affairs. In Turnbull's *Diary* (Scot. Hist. Soc.) there is also a reference to Robert Gourlay.

<sup>2</sup> Wodrow, III, 391.

<sup>3</sup> The name of Ecclesmagirdle occurs in various forms—Exmagirdle, Ecclesiama-girdle, Examgridin, and in the latest edition of Scott's *Fasti*, it appears as Ecclesia

Most probably Thomas Smal fell in one of the contests <sup>1</sup> with the Marquis of Montrose.

In the same category may be placed Andrew Smith, whose grave is in Longforgan, with the following inscription as his only record <sup>2</sup>:—

“ Hir rests ane Trev covenanter Androv Smyth <sup>3</sup> in  
Huntlie <sup>4</sup> aged 63, 1643. My Savl to praise the Lord  
A. S. E. F. Memento Mori.”

## V

In 1676 we read of Perth as being fined for conventicles, and “ insolent conventicles ” are spoken of by the Bishops. A goodly number were reported by Kirk Sessions as refusing to conform, and Wodrow says of them: “ As far as I can learn about them, they were the best in zeal and most shining piety in places where they lived and chargeable with nothing but their Presbyterian principles, and submitting to their conquerors when they could do no better.” The chief sufferers who were fined were Lord Ruthven, £4600 Scots; Oliphant of Gask, £6000; Blair of Kinfauns, £4600; James Duncan of Balhousie, 2000 Merks; Patrick Hay of Leys, 1000 Merks; Andrew Drummond of Megginch, £500, because his wife was present at a conventicle: his son, John, a merchant in Perth, was imprisoned till his father should pay the fine. Alexander Christie and Thomas Keltie, merchants in Perth, were also among those mentioned as having been fined.<sup>5</sup>

moghridian. It is thought likely that it means “ The Church of St Adrian.” The neighbouring nunnery of Elcho in the parish of Rhynd claimed connection with the Isle of May, where St Adrian lived until martyred by the Danes. To St Adrian also the churches of Lindores and Flisk in the north of Fife were dedicated.

After the Reformation the Chapel of Exmagirdle was served by a reader until, in 1652, it was annexed to Dron parish. The property was subsequently bought by the Rev. Hary Inglis, minister of the parish of Forteviot, 1752–1790. It was inherited by his son, the Rev. John Inglis of Tibbermore, afterwards Dr Inglis of Greyfriars', the well-known church leader and first Foreign Mission convener of the Church of Scotland. When in Greyfriars' Dr Inglis sold it, and bought some fields near Glencorse, from which his son, Lord President Inglis, took his title of “ Glencorse.”

<sup>1</sup> Fittis's *A Covenanters' Burial*, p. 266; Thomson's *Martyr Graves of Scot.*, 2nd Series, pp. 70, 71.

<sup>2</sup> Philip, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> Dr Philip says that “ possibly Andrew Smith was a descendant of the brave worthy of Longforgan who some centuries before shielded Sir William Wallace—a yet earlier champion in Freedom's sacred cause.”

<sup>4</sup> The Huntly Burn, rising not far from Rossie Priory in the parish of Longforgan, falls into the Firth of Tay not far from Longforgan Railway Station.

<sup>5</sup> Cowan, II, 172, 173; Philip, pp. 67–69.

In 1682 special measures were being taken to counteract the increase of conventicles, specially round the City of Perth, and in 1684 the Kirk Sessions of Perth summoned quite a large number before them. The chief localities for the gatherings were at Bridge-of-Earn, Megginch, Glendoick,<sup>1</sup> and Dupplin,

There are two or three conventicles, however, which demand more than to be merely mentioned. On a Sabbath in October 1678, at Methven, a large congregation, composed of a great many from the City of Perth, assembled in a wood not far from where the present parish church stands. The proprietor being absent, his wife (Mrs Smythe) came with a pistol in one hand and a sword in the other, at the head of a band of sixty retainers, and ordered them to remove off her husband's grounds, "or it would be a bloody day." The Covenanters said they were determined to preach whether she would allow it or not. Eventually, to avoid bloodshed, they removed to another field and there held their meeting. Next Sunday the ports of Perth were closed to "keep in the rabble of rebels" from attending conventicles.<sup>2</sup>

On that Sunday a conventicle assembled on the Ochils on Culteuchar Hill in the parish of Forgandenny. Without any request to disperse or warning of any kind, they were fired on by a company of Athole Highlanders under the command of the Laird of Ballechin, in the parish of Logierait. The people dispersed and were all able to escape except Andrew Brodie,<sup>3</sup> who was shot by one of the soldiers. According to a tradition, based on information, gathered from some of his descendants and incorporated in the *Statistical Account*, Andrew Brodie's wife was with him at the conventicle and covered up his body with her scarlet cloak. One of the soldiers came up and asked her what she thought of her husband now, and received the reply: "I think more of him than ever."<sup>4</sup>

On the south side of the parish church of Forgandenny, there stands

<sup>1</sup> Glendoick, variously spelt Glendoig, Glendoik, situated about a mile N.E. from Glencarse Railway Station.

<sup>2</sup> Fittis's *Memorabilia of Perth*, pp. 258, 259.

<sup>3</sup> Sometimes written Breddie (as in Wodrow). Brodie lived "at my Lord Ruthven's gate on the Green of Freeland," just to the east of Forgandenny village.

<sup>4</sup> The reply is very like that of the wife of the martyred John Brown of Priesthill in like circumstances. The site of the conventicle cannot now be determined with any certainty. Culteuchar Farm (sometimes spelt Coltenachar) is situated in a valley on the Ochils, about two miles south from Forgandenny village. There is now no evidence of any cave near the probable site. It is likely that it may have taken place on the westward slope towards Ardargie. V. Wodrow, II, 484. Lady Methven in an account of this conventicle said: "Ballechin had a sore tassel among the Ochil Hills. The Athole men got sore travels, and came home laden with booty less or more."



in the churchyard an upright stone, three feet in height by two in breadth, with the following inscription :—

HERE LYES  
 ANDREW BRODIE WRIG  
 HT IN FORGÜDENNY WHO  
 AT THE BREAK OF A MEETING  
 OCT 1678 WAS SHOT BY A  
 PARTY OF HIGHLAND MEN  
 COMMANDED BY BALLECH  
 EN AT A CAVES MOUTH FLY  
 ING THITHER FOR HIS LIFE AND  
 THAT FOR HIS ADHERENCE  
 TO THE WORD OF GOD & SCO  
 TLANDS COVENANTED  
 WORK OF REFORMATION  
 REV. 12. 11.

The parish of Cargill was noted for its zeal in covenanting. In July 1681 the district had a visit from the West from a noted Covenanter of the name of Wighton. Previous to his departure from the district an assemblage of 400 or 500 persons had come together at a place called Broadgreen in a secluded dell between Stobhall and the hamlet of Cargill. News had been received of this assembly. Dalziel of Binns was stationed at Stobhall and information was conveyed to him that a noted covenanter, Gilbert West,<sup>1</sup> was sure to be there. Orders were given that, whoever might escape, West must be taken. An alarm was raised that the soldiers were approaching, and, as the company dispersed, Gilbert West was seen running among rocks and boulders impassable to horsemen. The men dismounted and bullets were fired. He disappeared in a thicket of brushwood, and then re-appeared, and when last seen, was running. Thinking that he had escaped they gave up pursuit. Later on, when all the others had returned to their homes, it was found that Gilbert had not come back, and three weeks later his remains were discovered, pierced with four or five bullets, near where he was last seen. The ravine in which he was found is to this day called "Gibbie's Den," and the occurrence is spoken of as "The Raid of Broadgreen." His grave was marked by a stone in Cargill churchyard, but it was soon destroyed by his enemies, as merciless to him in death as they had been in life.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The descendants of Gilbert West lived in the parish of Cargill within the memory of some aged inhabitants. Tradition describes him as one of the "Nine Nobles of Whitefield."

<sup>2</sup> For accounts of this conventicle, see Hunter I, 403; and Marshall's *Historic Scenes of Perthshire*, p. 246.

In summing up Perth's share of the hardships of the Covenant days, we have found that it has at least made a contribution to the Way of the Cross in our land. It has been a refuge for those who have fought on sterner fields, and has been the nursery of heroes who have given their lives at the battle front of the Good Fight of faith. It has at least a heritage of heroism that should not be allowed to drop out of remembrance. In the words of Dr Adam Philip : " If we cannot point to battlefields where the flag of the Covenant was unfurled, if we have no Drumclog nor Priesthill of which to tell, and if dreaded dragoons did not carry fire and sword through our borders and drench our hillsides as they drenched the hillsides of Ayrshire and Annandale, we have names to cherish of whom the world was not worthy, and noble deeds to remember."